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A FUNCTION OF THE CLASSICAL EXORDIUM

The exordium of the classical speech, which called for separate and full treatment in the ancient rhetoricians, is passed over practically without comment in modern books of rhetoric. At first rhetoric treated exclusively of the spoken word; now it is confined almost wholly to the written word, except in the case of those books that still continue the traditions of the art of eloquence. Students of the Classics, however, cannot well afford to ignore the old rhetoric and its precepts, and it is a pleasing feature of most of the recent editions of Cicero's Orations that the general outlines of each speech, as laid down in rhetoric, have been embodied in the introductions or the notes. The present paper, which attempts to clarify the functions of the exordium, may help on this good cause.

The exordium from time immemorial had a triple function to perform: *reddere auditores benevolos, attentos, dociles*, as the Latins put it. The first two functions, gaining the goodwill of the audience and winning its attention, by removing prejudices against the speaker or his cause and by dwelling on the importance or the advantages or the novelty of his topic, have been pretty well understood, but the third function, which has been styled making the hearers *docile*, has not been as clearly grasped. For this fact there are two main reasons. First, the English word *docile* has taken on associations which were not in the Latin word *docilis*; much less were they contained in the Greek original. In the second place, the meaning of *docilis* is so obvious and so simple, and this function of the exordium is so plainly taken for granted that it would almost seem unnecessary to notice it. Why mention the obvious fact that a man should say what he is talking about, or why give any precepts about it? Yet the principal thing an orator does when he makes his hearers *dociles* is to tell them the topic of his discourse.

Anaximenes, if he is the author of the *Rhetorica ad Alexandrum*, is one of the first to mention the three functions distinctly; he states that the orator performs the duty of making his hearers *dociles*, if he simply says, 'I arise for the purpose of advising that we should wage war in behalf of the Syracusans', or 'I arise in order to show that we ought not to send aid to the Syracusans' (Chapter 29). This is indeed a very simple case, and in connection with it the intellectual preparation of the audience did not call for much elaboration. But as a rule the function in question did not involve much more than the brief and clear statement of the subject to be discussed, with an indication perhaps of the parts into which the discussion was to be divided and a hint at the way the topic was to be handled. It will be evident, therefore, why Aristotle

called this function the most necessary of the three and the only essential one (see below, page 205). Unfortunately, some modern rhetoricians have given to the term meanings it never had, and some commentators on Aristotle, because of a false interpretation of a not very clear sentence, have made a further mystery of a simple term. These are the reasons which justify a fairly complete statement of the history of the terms *docilitas* and *docilis*. In our discussion the Latin term has usually been kept because of the ambiguity of the English word *docile*.

Blair, in Lecture 31 of his *Rhetoric*, speaking of the ends or purposes of an introduction or exordium, says: "The third end is to render the hearers docile, or open to persuasion, for which end we must begin by studying to remove any particular prepossessions they may have contracted against the cause or side of the argument which we espouse".

This statement has been embodied in other books of rhetoric and is responsible in a great measure for a misconception of the original meaning of this well-known rhetorical term (a recent rhetorician renders it by the English word 'submissive'). Originally *docilis* referred to a purely intellectual preparation of the audience, had none of the associations of our English word *docile*, which describes in most of its uses a moral quality of the will, and had nothing to do with "particular prepossessions contracted against the cause".

What is the evidence to show that Blair misses the correct meaning of the term? It may be grouped under three heads: (1) the Greek rhetoricians, (2) the Latin rhetoricians, and (3) the more recent rhetoricians.

(1) *The Greek Rhetoricians*.—The triple function of the exordium antedates Aristotle. The original inventor of the term is not known (see Navarre: *Essai sur la Rhetorique Grecque avant Aristote*, 213). The Greek term for *docilis* is *εὐμαθής* and means, according to Navarre, to be in a condition to understand, that is, to follow the explanation of the case. He says Latin renders the idea poorly by *docilis* and that French renders it worse by *docile*. The English *docile*, it might be added, is equally as bad, unless to it be given in this use a strictly technical sense.

The first author cited for the term is the writer of the *Rhetorica ad Alexandrum* (already quoted above on this page), ascribed by some to Anaximenes (it is printed among Aristotle's works). In Chapter 29 this writer says that *docilitas* is obtained by the 'clear and summary statement of the subject to those not acquainted with it, that they may know what the speech is about and may follow the question' (see Spengel, *Rhetores Graeci* 1.214).

Dionysius of Halicarnassus (*Lysias*, Chapter 24), writes concerning the same function that, according

to the rhetoricians, 'the speakers should state their case concisely, that the judges may not be ignorant of the question and of what is to be said'. In the same chapter he explains the other functions of the exordium.

An anonymous writer in Walz, *Rhetores Graeci* 7. 66, gives the following method of obtaining *docilitas*: γίνεται εὐμάθεια ὅταν σαφῶς παριστῶμεν τὸ πρᾶγμα περὶ οὗ μέλλομεν ποιεῖσθαι τὸν λόγον, i. e. '*docilitas* is produced whenever we clearly state the subject about which we are going to make our speech'.

Longinus, in Walz 9. 557, says: καὶ καταρχὰς μὲν ἐπαγγέλλαν ἔχει καὶ μερισμὸν τῶν κεφαλαίων τὸ προοίμιον καὶ τὴν μὲν ἐπαγγελίαν ἔχει τῆς ἀποδείξεως τὸν δὲ μερισμὸν εὐμαθείας ἕνεκα, 'At the beginning the exordium has an announcement and a division of the topics; it has the announcement for the sake of the proof and the division for the sake of *docilitas*'.

Compare also an anonymous writer in Spengel, *Rhetores Graeci* 1. 428: εἰδότες γὰρ οἱ ἀκούοντες περὶ ὧν οἱ λόγοι εὐμαθέστεροι γινήσονται. εὐμάθειαν δὲ ποιεῖ προέκθεσις ἀνανέωσις μερισμὸς, 'Those who know what the speeches treat of are more *dociles*. Proposition, review, division produce *docilitas*'. The author goes on to define and illustrate the terms, giving an example of proposition and of division. The term *review* is strange in this connection, especially as the writer states that the proposition and the division belong in the beginning of the speech, but not the *review*, 'for there is no review (refreshing of the memory) of what has not been previously stated'. An obvious fact to be sure!

The Opinion of Aristotle.—It has not been generally recognized where Aristotle treats of *docilitas*. Cope, as will be seen presently, thinks Aristotle treats of it in a single sentence in his *Rhetoric*, in the middle of a discussion on *attentio*; he seems to overlook the fact that Aristotle treats exclusively of this function through two sections (3. 14. 5-6). Aristotle treats of the exordium in *Rhetoric* 3. 14. He divides the chapter into three parts: the exordium in demonstrative or epideictic oratory, 1-4, in judicial oratory, 5-11, in deliberative oratory, 12. He treats of the three well known functions of the exordium under judicial oratory. In 5-6 he discusses *docilitas*, in 7-11 the other functions¹. The following is Jebb's translation of the principal portion of 5-6: "The introduction is an indication of the subject, in order that the hearers may know it beforehand, and that their thoughts may not be in suspense;—for the indefinite bewilders, so that he who puts the opening, as it were, into the hand of the listener, makes it immediately easy for him to follow the story".

¹ Aristotle approaches these three functions in the same spirit in which, in the preceding chapter (3. 13), he treated of the traditional parts of the speech. These were divided into essential (necessary) and non-essential. In the same way here, he divides the three traditional functions of the exordium into the essential or necessary one, *docilitas*, and the non-essential or remedial functions, *benevolentia* and *attentio*.

The first lines of the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey* are cited as examples.

Aristotle does not call this a species of exordium, but rather ἀναγκαῖότατον ἔργον τοῦ προοιμίου, "most necessary function" (Cope); "essential task" (Jebb). This work done by the exordium is admitted to be and evidently is wholly intellectual.

How can it be shown that Aristotle is referring to *docilitas* in 5-6?

(a) By terminology. Practically the same terms are employed by Aristotle here that are used by Anaximenes and Dionysius where they treat of *docilitas*. I subjoin the pertinent passages from the three writers¹:

Aristotle (*Rhet.* 3. 14.5): δειγμα τοῦ λόγου ἵνα προδῶσι περὶ οὗ ὃ λόγος—ποιεῖ ἀκολουθεῖν τῷ λόγῳ—δηλῶσαι οὐ ἔνεκα ὁ λόγος.

Anaximenes (*Rhetorica ad Alexandrum*, Chapter 29): τοῦ πράγματος ἐν κεφαλῇ (cf. Aristotle, *Rhet.* 3.14.9) μὴ εἰδῶσι δῆλως ἵνα γινώσκωσι περὶ ὧν ὁ λόγος, παρακολουθῶσι τε τῇ ὑποθέσει.

Dionysius (*Lysias*, Chapter 24): εἰς γε τὸ εὐμαθεῖς τοὺς ἀκροατὰς ποιῆσαι, κελύουσι συστρέψαντας εἰπεῖν τὸ πρᾶγμα, ἵνα μὴ ἀγνοῶσι τὴν ὑπόθεσιν οἱ δικάσται—δειγμα τοῦ πράγματος.

(b) By testimony. Quintilian (4. 1.34), explaining how to obtain *docilitas*, gives as an example the opening lines of Homer, the very example that Aristotle uses in 5-6. Since Quintilian wrote with this chapter of Aristotle before him (he criticises some of Aristotle's statements), it would seem he understood Aristotle to be speaking of *docilitas*.

(c) By exclusion. There were before Aristotle's time three functions of the exordium. If the production of *docilitas* is not the "necessary task" discussed in 5-6, there must be a fourth function not heard of before or since. The gaining of *benevolentia* and the winning of *attentio* belong to the remedial tasks of the exordium, because not to have these qualities would constitute a defect in a judge. Every judge has the obligation to be unprejudiced and to be willing to attend to the evidence. He cannot, however, be expected to know the precise point or the division of the prosecution or of the defence. Hence to convey such information is in Aristotle's view essential; to produce the other qualities of *benevolentia* and *attentio* is not essential to the speech but arises from the defects of the hearers, as Aristotle explains in the chapter.

(d) By the meaning of εὐμάθεια elsewhere. In Aristotle *Rhet.* 1. 6. 15 the term denotes a wholly intellectual quality in a place where the author is distinguishing moral, physical and intellectual qualities. In *Moralia Magna* 1. 5 the term is purely intellectual and is distinguished expressly from moral qualities.

The constituent elements of εὐμάθεια are all intellectual as given in Walz, *Rhetores Graeci* 7. 696:

¹ All three have been cited above in translations.

Μέρη εὐμαθείας τρία, ἀγχίνοια, μνήμη, δξύτης. Μνήμη μὲν οὖν ἐστὶ τήρησις ὧν ἔμαθέ τις· δξύτης δὲ ἡ ταχυτής τῆς διανοίας· ἀγχίνοια δὲ τὸ ἐξ ὧν ἔμαθέ τις ἃ μὴ ἔμαθε θηρεύειν.

Aristotle does not, it is true, make use of the stereotyped technical term in 5-6. There can, however, hardly be any doubt of his meaning. The *Rhetorica ad Alexandrum* (Anax. l.c.) also omits the term, but since both authors mention the other two functions immediately and since the three functions were well known, the mere omission of the technical term does not affect our conclusion.

Had Cope (Aristotle's *Rhetoric*, 3. p. 171; Introduction, p. 340) noted that Aristotle was giving his doctrine on *docilitas* in 5-6, he would not have said that Aristotle includes *docilitas* under *attentio*. The two functions are connected, as will be seen presently, but they are distinct. What led Cope astray is a sentence in 7, a sentence to which Jebb has given a new version that keeps Aristotle consistent with himself and at one with all other rhetoricians. Cope indeed gives what has been the traditional version of the sentence in question, but Jebb's rendering is correct.

Here is the sentence: *εἰς δὲ εὐμάθειαν ἅπαντα ἀνάξει, ἐάν τις βούληται καὶ τὸ ἐπιεικὴ φαίνεσθαι. προσέχουσι γὰρ μᾶλλον τούτοις.*

Cope, *Rhetoric* 3. p. 172, translates thus: "(εὐμάθεια, *docilitas*, need not be made a separate topic, because) any speaker may refer to this (carry back, i. e. apply) anything he pleases (any of the topics of the *προοίμιον*), even the appearance of respectability and worth; for to these (τοῖς ἐπιεικέσι) the audience is always more inclined to attend".

Jebb, *Rhetoric of Aristotle*, p. 183, renders as follows: "The whole art of the proem may be summed up in this, if you like, making the hearers docile and making yourself seem estimable, for estimable people are heard with more attention".

Cope's interpretation supposes *docilitas* in the passage to be an effect; whereas it is rather a cause of which *attentio* is the effect. The phrase *ἀνάγειν εἰς* is used often by Aristotle to refer back to a cause. In the *Rhetoric* (I. 4. 3) we have the phrase, and this is the way Cope interprets it: "But it is plain that advice is confined to those things which we deliberate about; and these are all such as may be referred to ourselves as authors or agents (ἀν' ἀγεσθαι εἰς ἡμᾶς) or of which the origin of generation (i. e. of bringing about or effecting) is in our own power" (Introd. to Aristotle's *Rhetoric*, p. 173). Other instances of the same phrase, always with the same meaning 'to refer back to as to a cause', may be found in Nic. Eth. 3. 3. 17; 3. 5. 6; 3. 9. 7. In this particular passage there is a contrast with the sentence preceding, where we have *εἰς γέλωτα προάγειν*. As *ἀνά* is contrasted here with *πρό*, its meaning would naturally be 'back to'. Now we would not say 'refer back to an effect'. The preceding sentence denotes motion forward to an effect and so this sentence by contrast will denote motion back to a cause. Further, Cope's interpretation implies that Aristotle is in this sentence taking *docilitas* for separate discussion. but the parallelism with

the preceding sentence would in that case be lost sight of, and other violence would be done to the context. The question Aristotle is considering is whether *attentio* in as far as it is derived from the person of the hearer can be dispensed with. 'Many', he says, 'strive to provoke people to a laugh in order to make them inattentive'. 'No', replies Aristotle, 'don't distract your audience by a joke but bring them back to a full grasp of the subject and to an appreciation of your personal worth, and you will rather have their attention'. The emphatic position of *εὐμάθειαν* delicately suggests the contrast with *γέλωτα*, and the *μᾶλλον* in the last clause of the sentence enforces it. This last clause, 'for they pay attention rather to these', shows that Aristotle is still treating of *attentio* as a principal topic. Cope says the meaning is, "*docilitas* need not be made a separate topic". In that case Aristotle would have said: 'Employ such and such means, for thus you will have *docilitas*'. But, on the contrary, he says employ such and such means and thus you will have *attentio*. This would seem to prove that the meaning, therefore, is rather that *attentio* from the person of the hearer need not be made a separate topic. This harmonizes with what follows, where Aristotle explains how *attentio* may be drawn from the importance, utility, novelty, and attractiveness of the *subject matter*.

Cope makes *ἅπαντα* the cause of *εὐμάθεια*, but, as has been shown, 'anything' is rather the effect, as in Jebb's version, where the words mean: 'by making your hearers *dociles* and by seeming worthy you do everything—to these two causes you may refer the whole effect called for here'.

Grammatically, again, Jebb's version is sound. The articular infinitive, which in Cope's translation is put in the same construction with *ἅπαντα*, is in Jebb's version put in the same construction with *εὐμάθειαν* and made dependent upon *εἰς*. There is no solid reasoning against such a course, and Jebb's version has the merit of avoiding all the difficulties urged against Cope's, while it keeps Aristotle consistent with himself and all other rhetoricians.

(2) *The Latin Rhetoricians*.—Cicero gives the fullest explanation of *docilitas* in *Orat.* Part. 8. The functions of the exordium, he says, are three: *ut amice, ut intellegenter, ut attente audiamur*. Here Cicero avoids the word *docilis*, and uses *intellegenter*. *Amice* corresponds to *benevolentia*, and *attente* to *attentio*. After explaining how the first end, good will, is obtained, especially by good character, he continues: *intellegenter autem ut audiamur et attente a rebus ipsis ordiendum est. Sed facillime auditor discit et quid agatur intellegit si complectare a principio genus naturamque causae, si definias, si divides, si neque prudentiam eius impediatis confusione partium nec memoriam multitudinem; quaeque mox de narratione dilucida dicuntur, eadem etiam huc poterunt recte referri.* Note that *facillime discit* is a close rendering of the Greek term, and mark the means made use of, all intellectual.

Quintilian speaks of *docilitas* in 4. 1. 34: Docilem sine dubio et haec ipsa praestat attentio; sed et illud, si breviter et dilucide summam rei, de qua cognoscere debeat, iudicaverimus, quod Homerus atque Vergilius operum suorum principiis faciunt. Nam is eius rei modus est, ut propositioni similior sit quam expositioni; nec quomodo quidque sit actum sed de quibus dicturus sit ostendat. Nec video, quod huius rei possit apud oratores reperiri melius exemplum quam Ciceronis pro A. Cluentio. He then cites the opening sentence of that speech.

The intellectual nature of *docilitas* in Latin rhetoricians is proved (a) from the words used in defining it; (b) from the causes which are proposed to obtain it, which are e.g. proposition, definition, division, causes that formally and directly produce an effect upon the mind; (c) from the kind of cases in which *docilitas* is to be the chief, if not the only, function of the exordium. Cicero De Invent. 1. 15 and Quintilian 4. 1. 40 give five kinds of cases; Cicero declares that *docilitas* should be the chief function of the exordium in the *genus obscurum* in quo tardi auditores sunt aut difficilioribus ad cognoscendum negotiis causa implicita est. *Docilitas*, therefore, is to be produced where there are intellectual difficulties to be contended with, either on the part of the audience or on the part of the subject.

(3) *More Recent Rhetoricians*.—Victorinus, in his commentary on Cicero's De Inventione, says of the introduction of that work: Hic Cicero fecit dociles auditores, cum, quid sit eloquentia, ostendit; attentos, cum dicit se de eloquentia dicturum, re scilicet magna; benevolos quidem, quia ostendit futurum commodum (Capperonierus, Antiqui Rhetores Latini, 102). Deinde ostendit quo pacto dociles auditores facere debeamus; si, inquit, in principiis ea quae sunt nobis dicenda, ponamus ut nobis iudices ad cognoscendum negotium comparemus (ibid. p. 145).

Isidorus, De Arte Rhetorica, writes: Benevolum precando, docilem instruendo, attentum excitando facimus (ibid. p. 388). Alcuin, be it noted, repeats Quintilian (ibid. p. 397). Martianus Capella says: Docilem facimus si de causa aliquid strictum quo instruamus iudicem proferatur (ibid. p. 432).

Modern rhetoricians in France as well as in Italy follow Cicero and Quintilian almost without exception, so far as we have been able to examine. They often use Cicero's very words, as De Inventione 1. 16 Dociles auditores faciemus, si aperte et breviter summam causae exponemus, hoc est, in quo consistat controversia. Here 'clearness, brevity, exposition of the point at issue' are all indications that a purely intellectual effect is aimed at.

Relation of the three functions to one another: With *benevolentia* a man listens willingly as to a friend; with *attentio* he listens attentively as one interested; with *docilitas* he listens intelligently as

one informed of the subject under discussion. Cicero expresses the function by the three adverbs *amice, attente, intellegenter*. I may have one without the other two. I may be a friend of an orator without necessarily being interested in his subject or being prepared to follow the discussion of it. I may be interested in the subject and not be friendly disposed to the speaker. Take the subject, Abraham Lincoln, to Georgia, and it might not interest, perhaps not even if H. W. Grady spoke on it. Take the subject to Illinois and let an orator enthusiastically admired speak on it, there will be good will and interest; but let the orator take an obscure proposition or involved division or a confused or mysterious aspect of the question and there will be no *docilitas*.

Yet these three functions, though distinct, can and often do help one another. My interest in a subject and my understanding of it are conditioned by my will to listen. My will to listen may depend upon the way the subject is handled and presented to me. The astronomers of to-day are most willing to know all about Mars and its canals and many are engrossed in its contemplation, but, since it is difficult to get the proper light and distance, they are still in doubt on the subject. They are *benevoli* and *attenti*. The man who will discover a better telescope and bring the subject within the field of accurate vision will make them *dociles*. This application of the terms to the eyes may help to understand their application to the mind.

If the mutual dependence and connection of the three functions be remembered, it will not be hard to explain why one function helps to produce the effect of another function. Aristotle, as has been seen, says that *attentio* may be had under certain circumstances by the help of the other functions. Auctor ad Herenn. (1. 4. 7) says *attentio* helps to *docilitas*: docilis est qui attente vult audire. Cicero (De Inv. 1. 15) makes a similar statement. Quintilian too (4. 1. 34) says, Docilem sine dubio et haec ipsa praestat attentio. These are all indications of the close connection of these three functions operating on the same hearer. All these statements, however, are, like Aristotle's, incidental remarks because, when these writers explain the functions, the terms they use, the examples they give, the means they advise all go to show the distinction between the three tasks of the exordium and that *docilitas* denotes a purely intellectual preparation of the audience, a mental outlook on the topic of the speech and on its proposed treatment, the furnishing of a traveller's map or brief guide book to those who are to journey with the orator. If, then, with that the listeners are willing to go along (*benevoli*) and are deeply interested in the country promised them (*attenti*), the speaker may hope to be successful in reaching the destined goal, persuasion.

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